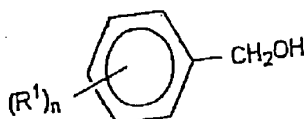


AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS**Claim 1 (currently amended)**

A process for the preparation of a salt of an ω -benzyl ester of an amino dicarboxylic acid, comprising A) reacting the amino dicarboxylic acid with a benzyl alcohol derivative of the formula



wherein ~~R¹ is hydrogen or~~ R¹ is individually selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, C₁ to C₄ alkyl, C₁ to C₄ alkoxy and halogen and n is 1 or 3, in the presence of an alkanesulfonic acid catalyst with a molar ratio of at least one mole of catalyst per mole of the amino dicarboxylic acid ~~of an alkanesulfonic acid~~, B) optionally in the presence of a solvent to obtain a salt thereof and optionally reacting the salt with a base to obtain the free form thereof.

Claim 2 (previously presented)

The process of Claim 1, wherein the amino dicarboxylic acid is an α -amino carboxylic acid carrying another carboxyl group attached to a carbon other than that in the α position.

Claim 3 (previously presented)

The process of Claim 2, wherein the amino dicarboxylic acid is glutamic acid or aspartic acid.

Claim 4 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein the alcohol of formula (I) is benzyl alcohol.

Claim 5 (currently amended)

The process of claim 1 wherein the temperature of the A reaction is less than or equal to 80°C.

Claim 6 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein the benzyl alcohol or its derivative of formula (I) is used in an amount of 1.2 to 3 mol per mole of the amino dicarboxylic acid.

Claim 7 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein the alkanesulfonic acid is methanesulfonic acid.

Claim 8 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein the amount of alkanesulfonic acid used is 1.01 to 2 mol per mole of the amino dicarboxylic acid.

Claim 9 (currently amended)

The process of claim 1 wherein the solvent of the A) reaction is selected from the group consisting of aliphatic and aromatic and halogenated and nonhalogenated hydrocarbons.

Claim 10 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein the ω -benzyl ester of the amino dicarboxylic acid is obtained in the free form by bringing the alkanesulfonate of the ω -benzyl ester of the amino dicarboxylic acid into contact with an organic or inorganic base.

Claim 11 (previously presented)

The process of Claim 10, wherein the base is used in an amount sufficient to reach the isoelectric point of the ester to be obtained.

Claim 12 (previously presented)

The process of Claim 10 wherein the base is an aqueous ammonia solution.

Claim 13 (currently amended)

The process of claim 1 wherein the salt ~~alkanesulfonate of the ω -benzyl ester of the amino dicarboxylic acid~~ is crystallized before being converted to the free ω -benzyl ester of the amino dicarboxylic acid.

Claim 14 (currently amended)

The process of claim 1 wherein a solvent/water azeotrope is distilled off the A)
reaction at a temperature of less than 80°C.

Claim 15 (currently amended)

The process of claim 1 wherein the salt ~~alkanesulfonate of the α -benzyl ester of~~
~~the amino-dicarboxylic acid~~ is isolated before being brought into contact with the base.

Claim 16 (currently amended)

The process of claim 1 wherein the ~~alkanesulfonate of the α -benzyl ester of the~~
~~amino-dicarboxylic acid~~ salt is not isolated from the medium before this ester is released.

Claim 17 (currently amended)

The process of claim 1 wherein the salt ~~alkanesulfonate of the α -benzyl ester to~~
~~be converted to the free ester~~ is dissolved in water.

Claim 18 (previously presented)

The process of claim 17 wherein a solvent for the benzyl alcohol derivative is
added with the water or after the introduction of water.

Claim 19 (currently amended)

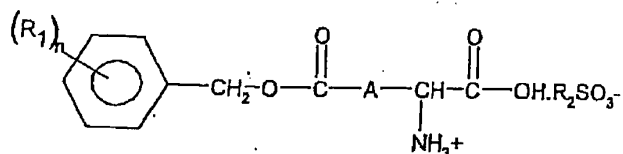
The process of claim 1 wherein, after having reached the pH of the isoelectric point of the A) reaction, the medium is heated.

~~**Claim 20**~~ (cancelled)

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~~**Claim 21**~~ (previously presented)

Alkanesulfonate having the formula



wherein R^1 is hydrogen or is individually selected from the group consisting of C_1 to C_4 alkyl, C_1 to C_4 alkoxy and halogen, A is selected from the group consisting of an aliphatic, cycloaliphatic, aryl, araliphatic or heterocyclic and R^2 is alkane residue of the alkanesulfonic acid.

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~~**Claim 22**~~ (previously presented)

An alkanesulfonate of claim 21 wherein it is γ -benzyl glutamate methanesulfonate or β -benzyl aspartate methane sulfonate.